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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ NYC Gets New Domain!

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When former Xbox chief Don Mattrick announced that he was leaving Microsoft on Monday, talk naturally turned to who would replace him, especially since the company is preparing to launch its new Xbox One console in just a few months. Geek notes that for the time being, Microsoft's Xbox division will be run by none other than Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, who told employees in an email on Monday that Don's directs will report to me and will continue to drive the day-to-day business as a team, particularly focused on shipping Xbox One this

holiday. It's unclear if Ballmer's takeover of the Xbox division is a temporary measure or whether he sees himself as the best man for the job long-term.

PS Vita Is Now Crushing Nintendo's Wii U

A fascinating drama is playing out in Sony and Nintendo's home market: the PS Vita has found a new lease on life, while the Wii U continues flatlining. This could have a profound impact on how powerful Japanese game developers map out their 2014 and 2015 software strategies. During the week ending in June 30, Sony's portable console found the third biggest smash of its life cycle so far as *Toukiden* sales for the PS Vita hit 127,000 in its first week of availability. According to Famitsu, this lifted Vita's weekly hardware sales to 34,000 from 14,000 in the previous week. This is splendid for Sony on two different levels. First, a title that wasn't expected to be a big seller managed to top 100,000 units without a massive marketing push. Second, the *Toukiden* debut had an immediate and substantial impact on Vita sales. Some of the recent Vita games have been very effective in helping to push system sales.

Meanwhile, Wii U is wilting in the heat of the media hype now surrounding the upcoming PlayStation 4 and Xbox One launches. In the latest weekly tracking data, Wii U sales clocked in at 5,800 in Japan. This is barely 5% of Japan's total console sales, even though PlayStation 3 sales are now weak as consumers have started anticipating its successor.

The power of the portable machines in Japan is now a sight to behold. The combined sales of Nintendo's 3DS and Sony's PS Vita now make up nearly 74% of the total console market. During good weeks for the Vita, Sony manages to nearly close the gap with 3DS—the most recent tally showed the 3DS at 45,000 units and the PS Vita at 34,000 units.

This is setting up a situation where it would be tempting for the Japanese game developers to draft a 3DS/Vita portable game strategy combined with some ambitious PlayStation 4 games for 2014. How is the Wii U going to get any third-party backing with its dismal hardware performance? Can Nintendo possibly reignite Wii U sales with Mario and Pokémon titles now that the PlayStation 4 media bandwagon is picking up momentum? And perhaps most intriguingly, will Japan become a console market that will continue to be dominated by portable consoles even after the PS4 debuts?

The current strength of the 3DS/Vita duo might not be attributable only to the Wii U's weakness. It is possible that the age of home consoles is simply drawing to an end as the mass market migrates towards the combination of smartphones, tablets and portable consoles.

Microsoft Teases Windows 8 Apps on Xbox One

Microsoft's Build developers conference in San Francisco has mainly focused on Windows 8.1 so far, but the company spent a few minutes talking about the future Xbox One development platform on Thursday. Steve Guggenheimer, vice president of Microsoft's Developer and Platform Evangelism group, provided big hints at how developers can target the Xbox One in the future. "Xbox one has two engines, it's got a gaming engine and

from merchandise using the company's logo.

Serves them right

As well as discussing Atari, Bushnell also spoke on other struggling game companies, including Zynga which last month was forced to lay off 500 employees:

"In some cases it serves them right. I hate to see the brand be abused but you just can't continue to abuse something. It's like killing the goose that laid the golden egg."

Several gaming companies have recently been forced to close, including Sony Liverpool and THQ, which in January auctioned off IPs such as Red Faction, Homefront and Darksiders.

As well as firing staff, shuttering games and closing down studios, Zynga is also attempting to turn itself around by branching into real-money gambling.

The company recently appointed former Xbox One boss Don Mattrick as CEO.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

China, US To Discuss Cybersecurity at Forum

China is ready to discuss strengthening cybersecurity with U.S. officials at a high-level forum next week and wants Washington to help settle territorial disputes in East Asia, officials said Friday.

Next week's two-day Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington will also include talks on finance and climate change and the inaugural gathering of a U.S.-Chinese cybersecurity group, the officials said at a government briefing.

Beijing is under U.S. pressure to crack down on cyberspying after security consultants tracked a wave of hacking attacks to China.

"We are ready to work with the United States and engage in dialogue and communication and, on the basis of mutual respect and mutual trust, enhance understanding and consensus and work with the international community to build a peaceful, secure, open and cooperative cyberspace," said Zheng Zeguang, an assistant foreign minister.

The U.S. delegation to the dialogue is to be led by Secretary of State John F. Kerry and Secretary of the Treasury Jacob J. Lew. The chief Chinese envoys will be State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Vice Premier Wang Yang. They are to be joined by finance, military, energy, environmental and other officials.

The annual talks are aimed at heading off trade and other disputes between the world's two largest economies and to promote cooperation on managing the global economy, climate change and other issues.

Security experts say China is a base for a large share of the world's cyberspying, some of which might be carried out by its military. Beijing has rejected that, saying China is a victim of computer hacking.

Asked about disclosures by former NSA employee Edward Snowden about U.S. government spying and whether those would influence the talks, Zheng said, "The information released by the media shows once again that China is among the victims of cyberattacks."

On regional issues, Zheng said Beijing wants Washington to "do more to contribute" to settling tensions over territorial disputes.

Referring to China's conflicting claims with the Philippines, Vietnam and other governments over the South China Sea, Zheng said, "the United States should do more to contribute to a proper settlement of the issue."

As for Beijing's dispute with Japan over a group of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, Zheng said Washington "should send correct instead of wrong signals and do more to contribute to the cooling of the situation."

Justin Carter Case: How One Man's Facebook 'Banter' Is Another's 'Threat'

Did Justin Carter make a threat, or a sarcastic joke? That's the question in the case of the New Braunfels, Texas, teenager arrested for a comment posted on Facebook that's generating national attention.

Mr. Carter was arrested several months ago on a third-degree felony charge of making a terroristic threat. According to court documents, police allege that he posted, "I'm [expletive] in the head alright. I'ma shoot up a kindergarten/ And watch the blood of the innocent rain down/ And eat the beating heart of one of them."

According to Carter's family and lawyer, the comment was a sarcastic response to a comment by another Facebook poster. He was 18 at the time, and this was banter by kids on the Internet. He's a gamer. He never intended to threaten anyone, he wasn't serious, says Donald Flanary, a defense attorney who recently took up the case on a pro bono basis.

A tip routed to a regional intelligence center led to Carter's arrest, Mr. Flanary says. "I can see how law enforcement can be sensitive to those kinds of comments, and I'm glad that there's a system to catch it," he adds. But for Carter to be jailed for months based on Facebook comments taken out of context, with bail set at \$500,000—about five times higher than many murder cases—is an injustice, he says.

This isn't the first time a teen Facebook post has led to charges of making threats. In Massachusetts this spring, an 18-year-old was arrested for a comment referring to bombing and murder, but a grand jury determined it was in the context of rap lyrics he was writing rather than a genuine threat.

There's no widespread trend of such cases, but even a handful of cases

where Americans lose their liberty for intemperate postings should get our attention, says Ken Paulson, president of the First Amendment Center at the Newseum in Washington and dean of the College of Mass Communication at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro.

There are safeguards that should lead to a critical analysis of provocative speech, he says.

In Carter's case, Mr. Paulson says, it seems like the entire [legal] system has overreacted to this post.

It's also one example of the myriad ways people are stumbling into trouble for behavior that has a wider audience on the Internet but would never get people into trouble back in the day when trash-talking simply took place in the living room as people played a violent video game, or when drunkenness was witnessed only by a few friends at a party.

Societally, people may want to steer fellow citizens away from using violent imagery in their online comments, but when it comes to police involvement, it's critical that we ensure their constitutional rights are protected, and free speech is at the core of that, Paulson says.

A hearing to reconsider Carter's bail is set for July 16.

Carter's father tells NPR that his son has been traumatized in jail seriously assaulted and put in solitary confinement because he's been depressed. Attorney Flanary says that Carter could eventually pursue a federal civil rights lawsuit for being wrongfully arrested and detained.

The legal process has failed at several points along the way, Flanary says. Carter was arrested before police confirmed that the Facebook post genuinely came from his computer—a step that's usually routine before even suspected child pornographers are arrested, he says. Police searched his house and found no guns or other threatening material. And it appears that they didn't look at the context of the Facebook post before arresting him.

Flanary says that prosecutors have since subpoenaed that information from Facebook but haven't produced anything along those lines yet.

Flanary also says the small screenshot originally sent by the tipster includes a negative comment against Carter, and that context was not included in the arrest warrant and indictment materials.

Context is important because if Carter's post was provoked by another's comment and was followed up by an acronym such as JK for just kidding—as his father has said in an interview with National Public Radio—then on the face of it, it would clearly not be a threat, Paulson of the First Amendment Center says.

Flanary speculates that one reason Carter has been jailed is that no individual agency wants to be the one that says, It's not a threat, let it go, because then if something happens they have to explain why they didn't do more.

Comal County (Texas) District Attorney Jennifer Tharp would not comment on the details of a pending case but said in a press release that the charge carries a potential penalty of two to 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000. A defendant never previously convicted of a felony may be eligible for deferred adjudication community supervision, which, if served successfully, would not result in a criminal record.

Ever since the mass shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, many states have bolstered laws to make it clear that threats against schools will be taken seriously and prosecuted, says Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center in Westlake Village, Calif. Indeed, tips from students about suspicious statements by their peers have prevented school attacks in recent years.

But threat assessment teams that include educators, law enforcement, and mental health experts should be in place to determine when someone's comments or actions constitute a real threat, Mr. Stephens says.

We rely on those enforcing the laws to use good, solid, fair, consistent judgment, and that seems to be the question in this [Carter] case whether it's been fair and reasonable, Stephens says. If prosecutors can't at some point produce their threat assessment process, they've got a real problem, he says.

Google Adds Malware, Phishing Numbers to Its Transparency Report to Make the Web 'Safer'

Google is revealing some new numbers around malware and phishing attempts in an effort to get more people thinking about online security and to make the Web safer.

The data is being incorporated into the company's biannual transparency reports, which are meant to provide clarity on the numbers for user data requests Google receives from government agencies and courts, as well as figures on removal requests received from copyright owners and governments and traffic reports for Google services worldwide.

The malware and phishing data stems from Google's Safe Browsing technology, which was established in 2006 to examine billions of URLs each day to find unsafe websites. These unsafe sites, Google said, generally fall into two categories: malware sites, which use code to install malicious software on users' computers; and phishing sites, which fake their legitimacy while trying to trick people into giving their user names and passwords or other private information online.

As of June 16, for instance, the company's Safe Browsing program had detected nearly 42,000 malware sites per week, according to data Google released Tuesday. For phishing sites, the rate clocked in at roughly 26,000.

Concerns over online security have been heightened in recent months following a spate of cyberattacks carried out against major companies such as The New York Times and the Jeep car company on sites like Twitter.

Google's thinking is that by providing details about these sorts of threats, we hope to shine some light on the state of web security and encourage safer web security practices, the company said in its report.

Google Safe Browsing is currently used by some 1 billion people, the company said. The service shows warnings when users navigate to unsafe websites while using the Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox and Apple Safari browsers.

With the new figures, people can see how many Safe Browsing warnings are delivered to users each week (more than 88 million as of June 16); where malicious sites are hosted around the world (Europe is a bit of a hotbed); how quickly websites become reinfected after malware is removed (the rate rises dramatically, due to periodic rescanning of infected sites, Google said); and other tidbits like webmaster response time.

We're always looking for new ways to protect users' security," said Google software engineer Lucas Ballard in a blog post announcing the data.

Users can report websites suspected of hosting or distributing malware [here](#), or a suspected phishing site [here](#), Google notes.

The report also includes a section on notable events, which details some specific security incidents that are responsible for the larger trends contained in the report. Earlier this month, for instance, a campaign targeting vulnerabilities in Java and Acrobat Reader infected more than 7,500 sites, resulting in more than 75 million Safe Browsing users to receive malware warnings.

As part of its larger transparency report, Google last released numbers on data removal requests in April, when they spiked to over 2000.

Sentences for Cyber Crime and Snooping To Be Tougher Across EU

EU lawmakers agreed on Thursday to toughen criminal penalties across the European Union for cyber attacks, especially those that include harming critical national infrastructure and hijacking computers to steal sensitive data.

The 28 EU member states currently have a patchwork of varying tariffs for cyber crime.

The decision mandates national maximum sentences of at least two years in prison for attempting to illegally access information systems.

The maximum penalty for attacks against infrastructure such as power plants, transport, or government networks will be set at five years or more, higher than the current tariff in most member states.

The decision also increases the penalties for illegally intercepting communications, or producing and selling tools to do this.

Cyber criminals often infect computers to form armies of zombie PCs known as "botnets" by sending spam emails containing malicious links and attachments, and by infecting legitimate websites with computer viruses.

Some botnet creators rent or sell infected machines on underground markets to other cyber criminals looking to engage in a wide variety of activities including credit card theft and attacks on government websites.

In June, Microsoft helped to break up one of the world's largest cyber crime botnets, believed to have stolen more than \$500 million from bank accounts.

Under the new EU rules, companies that benefit from botnets or hire

hackers to steal secrets will be liable for any offences committed on their behalf.

The European Parliament in Strasbourg voted 541 to 91 with nine abstentions on the proposal by the European Commission, the EU executive. However, Denmark has chosen to opt out of the rules, wanting to keep its own system in place.

EU governments now have two years to translate the decision into national law.

Windows 8.1 Doesn't Seem Likely To Help Sliding PC Sales

The upcoming launch of Windows 8.1 isn't expected to save the sliding PC industry. Loren Loverde of IDC believes that worldwide PC shipments could improve slightly in the second half of the year with the help of back-to-school specials and holiday shopping. The analyst noted that the results from May are behind pace for achieving the projected 2Q13 growth rates, however. Despite projecting small improvements for later this year, the firm warned that the market will likely remain cautious about the second half of 2013.

The expectation for the second quarter was not all that high, showing only minor improvement from the first quarter, Loverde said. But the May results reflect deteriorating conditions rather than improvement and the market will probably fall short of projections. IDC previously estimated that annual PC sales will decline -7.8% in 2013.

Apple's Latest Move Worries PC Vendor Rivals

Apple recently filed an application with the United States Patent and Trademark Office for a new type of computer port that combines a memory card reader with a standard USB port. The move seems somewhat innocuous on the surface, but Digitimes' unnamed supply chain sources say rival computer makers are very worried over this new filing. According to the report, notebook vendors believe the new technology will give Apple yet another edge over their laptop computers in terms of design and thinness, because Apple will be able to make its new MacBook line of computers even slimmer by combining these ports. Apple already has design patents that cover the MacBook Air's wedge design, the report noted, and this allows Apple to make notebooks that are slimmer and lighter than the competition.

Taiwan-based connector maker Kuang Ying pointed out that a conventional SD card port has a width of about 27.1mm and a USB port about 13.5mm, Digitimes' Joseph Tsai wrote. If the two ports are combined, brand vendors will be able to save about 12-13mm of space on their notebooks' exterior design, allowing them to add more functions.

Douglas C. Engelbart, a technologist who conceived of the computer mouse and laid out a vision of an Internet decades before others brought those ideas to the mass market, died on Tuesday night. He was 88.

Engelbart had suffered from poor health and died peacefully in his sleep, his daughter, Christina, told friends in an email.

Engelbart arrived at his crowning moment relatively early in his career, on a winter afternoon in 1968, when he delivered an hour-long presentation containing so many far-reaching ideas that it would be referred to decades later as the "mother of all demos."

Speaking before an audience of 1,000 leading technologists in San Francisco, Engelbart, a computer scientist at the Stanford Research Institute, showed off a cubic device with two rolling discs called an "X-Y position indicator for a display system." It was the mouse's public debut. Engelbart then summoned, in real-time, the image and voice of a colleague 30 miles away. That was the first videoconference. And he explained a theory of how pages of information could be tied together using text-based links, an idea that would later form the bedrock of the Web's architecture.

At a time when computing was largely pursued by government researchers or hobbyists with a countercultural bent, Engelbart never sought or enjoyed the explosive wealth that would later become synonymous with Silicon Valley success. He never received any royalties for the mouse, for instance, which SRI patented and later licensed to Apple Computer.

He was intensely driven instead by a belief that computers could be used to augment human intellect. In talks and papers, he described with zeal and bravado a vision of a society in which groups of highly productive workers would spend many hours a day collectively manipulating information on shared computers.

"The possibilities we are pursuing involve an integrated man-machine working relationship, where close, continuous interaction with a computer avails the human of radically changed information-handling and -portrayal skills," he wrote in a 1961 research proposal at SRI.

His work, he argued with typical conviction, "competes in social significance with research toward harnessing thermonuclear power, exploring outer space, or conquering cancer."

By 2000, Engelbart had won prestigious accolades including the National Medal of Technology and the Turing Award. He lived in comfort in Atherton, a leafy suburb near Stanford University.

At the same time, he wrestled with his fade into obscurity even as technology entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs and Bill Gates built fortunes off of the personal computer and became celebrity billionaires by realizing some of his early ideas.

In 2005, he told Tom Foremski, a technology journalist, that he felt the last two decades of his life had been a "failure" because he could not receive funding for his research or "engage anybody in a dialogue."

Douglas Carl Engelbart was born on January 30, 1925 in Portland to a radio repairman father and a homemaker mother.

He enrolled at Oregon State University, but was drafted into the U.S. Navy

and shipped to the Pacific before he could graduate. He resolved to change the world as a computer scientist after coming across a 1945 article by Vannevar Bush, the head of the U.S. Office of Scientific Research, while scouring a Red Cross library in a native hut in the Philippines, he told an interviewer years later.

After returning to the United States to complete his degree, Engelbart took a teaching position at the University of California, Berkeley, after Stanford declined to hire him because his research seemed too removed from practical applications.

He took a job at SRI in 1957, and by the early-1960s Engelbart led a team had begun to seriously investigate tools for interactive computing.

After coming back from a computer graphics conference in 1961, Engelbart sketched a design and tasked Bill English, an engineering colleague, to carve a prototype out of wood. Engelbart's team considered other designs, including a device that would be affixed to the underside of a table and controlled by the knee, but the desktop mouse won out. SRI would later license the technology for \$40,000 to Apple, which released the first commercial mouse with its Lisa computer in 1983.

By the late 1970s, Engelbart's research group was acquired by a company called Tymshare, and he struggled to secure funding for his work or return to the same heights of influence.

In his later years he founded a management seminar program called the Bootstrap Institute with his daughter Christina.

He is survived by Karen O'Leary Engelbart, his second wife, and four children: Gerda, Diana, Christina and Norman. His wife Ballard died in 1997.

New Yorkers' New Domain: '.nyc' Gets Initial OK

New York City likes to think of itself as a domain like no other, and now it's close to being able to boast as much on the web.

The city has gotten a key approval for a ".nyc" suffix online, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn announced Tuesday. That would mean web addresses could end in ".nyc" instead of such common suffixes as ".com" or ".org."

"Having our own unique, top-level domain .nyc puts New York City at the forefront of the digital landscape and creates new opportunities for our small businesses," Bloomberg said in a statement.

The city's new virtual realm is one of hundreds of new suffixes worldwide that have passed what are called "initial evaluations" by the agency in charge of online addresses, the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers. The list includes Istanbul, London and Paris, among other cities.

While some further approvals are needed, New York officials envision the new ".nyc" addresses becoming available late this year to city residents and entities with offices here. Fees haven't yet been determined.

The city has striven to cultivate technology companies during Bloomberg's

administration while City Councilwoman Gale Brewer and Quinn championed the idea of a ".nyc" domain several years ago.

Officials say it will make it easier for residents and visitors to pinpoint local services, give businesses an easily visible tie to what the city sees as a valuable locale-as-brand and help spread New York's image around the world.

For businesses and other local website owners, it also could mean a shot at getting their chosen name in ".nyc" if someone else already has taken it in the ".com" address or other established domain.

Neustar Inc., a Sterling, Va.-based communications company, will run the ".nyc" registry and is covering the costs to get it approved, the city said.

Nearly 2,000 bids for new top-level domain names from ".app" to ".pizza" to words in Chinese and Arabic were submitted last year after ICANN decided to embark on the largest expansion in the history of the online address system.

Americans Spend 23 Hours Per Week Online, Texting

Staying up-to-date on emails, social media and other means of online communication is a bigger time requirement than people may realize: New research has found that the average user spends 23 hours a week emailing, texting and using social media and other forms of online communication.

That number represents nearly 14 percent of the total time in a week. All that time is taking a toll on users, a new eMarketer report found. However, 54 percent of survey respondents said they have tried to decrease their reliance on technology in the past year in favor of more in-person contact. That number is only set to grow, with 62 percent of web users in the United States saying they hope to be able to decrease tech usage in the coming year so they can communicate face-to-face.

Despite those efforts, over the past year, users have increased the time they have spent using social networks, emailing, watching online videos, playing online games and reading or writing blogs. Additionally, time spent each day on online radio, newspapers and magazines has stayed the same over the past year.

Email is the biggest time consumer, the researchers found. Respondents said they spend nearly eight hours a week checking emails. Respondents also said they spend nearly seven hours a week on Facebook and five hours a week on YouTube. Moreover, users spend nearly the same amount of time each week on Google+ and Twitter.

Users are checking those platforms with varying frequency, though, the eMarketer report found. More than 75 percent of users checked email, texts, Facebook and Instagram at least one time a day. Other new platforms are growing in popularity as well.

"Photo-focused sites, particularly suited to mobile, seem to be especially popular," the eMarketer report said. "Instagram saw 70 percent of users logging in daily, and the relatively new Snapchat was just behind, with 67 percent of its users logging in daily."

Two-thirds of users also said they check YouTube once a day, while nearly 60 percent check Google+ daily. Just 40 percent of LinkedIn users check the site daily, but nearly half check it several times a week.

"Even as Web users report a desire to disconnect, and discussion circulates about Facebook users decreasing time spent, it remains to be seen whether social users will follow through on that promise to log off, or perhaps simply translate their time spent on social to the sites that best suit their communication needs," the eMarketer report said.

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